

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 06564 241640Z

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8629

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6564

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, EAGR, PINT, PO

SUBJ: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS: SURFACE CALM
IN THE ALENTAJIO

REF: LISBON 6529 (DTG 231205Z SEP 76)

SUMMARY: A WAR OF NERVES IS UNDERWAY IN THE ALENTEJO
IN THE WAKE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITS
INTENTION TO END AGRARIAN REFORM ABUSES. THE AGRARIAN
REFORM STATE SECRETARY SOUGHT TO DOWNPLAY THE
POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE. COMMUNIST "O DIARIO" CALLED
FOR SERENITY AND VIGILANCE. BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND
THE PCP APPEAR INTENT ON AVOIDING VIOLENCE. IN THE
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PAGE 02 LISBON 06564 241640Z

FACE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION, THE PCP MAY

HAVE BLINKED. END SUMMARY.

1. SURFACE CALM IN THE ALENTEJO: A WAR OF NERVES
IS UNDERWAY IN THE ALENTEJO IN THE WAKE OF THE TOUGH
MEASURES ANNOUNCED SEPT 21 TO END AGRARIAN REFORM
ABUSES (REFTEL).

-- THE STATEMENTS SEPT 23, AGRARIAN REFORM STATE
SECRETARY CASTRO GUERRA CONSCIOUSLY SOUGHT TO DOWN-
PLAY THE POSSIBILITY OF VIOLENCE. HE SAID ONLY
111 PROPERTIES WOULD BE CLEARED OF OCCUPANTS. THE
TOTAL AREA OF THIS LAND WAS LITTLE MORE THAN 10,000
HECTARES, NO MORE THAN 4 OR 5 PERCENT OF THE AREA
COVERED BY AGRARIAN REFORM. GUERRA ASSERTED THAT
THE WORKERS UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED THE NEED TO
CORRECT ABUSES. ONLY THE FORCES OF THE RIGHT AND
THE EXTREME LEFT, HE SAID, WERE INTERESTED IN
PROVOKING VIOLENCE.

-- ON THE SAME DAY PCP-LED RURAL WORKERS HELD MASS
MEETINGS IN EVORA, BEJA AND SETUBAL. THEIR ORCHESTRATED
CONCLUSIONS: AGRARIAN REFORM MUST PROCEED; THE LAW
MUST BE APPLIED IN FULL, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR
ADDITIONAL LAND EXPROPRIATIONS; RURAL WORKERS MUST
HAVE A VOICE IN ALL DECISIONS ON APPLICATION OF
THE LAW.

-- PCP MOUTHPIECE "O DIARIO," IN ITS LEAD EDITORIAL
SEPT 24, ADOPTED A CONCILIATORY LINE. IT
SECONDED THE CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY THE ALENTEJO
MASS MEETINGS AND CALLED FOR AN ATTITUDE OF "SERENITY
AND VIGILANCE." "O DIARIO" LINKED THE POSSIBILITY
OF VIOLENCE TO "MANEUVERS BY THE RIGHT AND THE
ADVENTUROUS LEFT." IT ECHOED THE RURAL WORKERS' CALL
FOR THE "FULL APPLICATION OF AGRARIAN REFORM" AS THE
BEST DEFENSE AGAINST VIOLENCE.

2. COIMBRA RECTOR OUT: EDUCATION MINISTER SOTTOMAYOR
CARDIA FURTHER ASSERTED CONTROL IN HIS MINISTRY SEPT 24
BY FIRING COIMBRA UNIVERSITY RECTOR DR. JOSE JOAQUIM
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PAGE 03 LISBON 06564 241640Z

TEIXEIRA RIBEIRO. TEIXEIRA RIBEIRO, A PCP/MDP
SYMPATHIZER, SERVED AS VICE PRIME MINISTER IN
THE SHORT-LIVED VASCO GONCALVES FIFTH PROVISIONAL
GOVERNMENT IN AUGUST 1975. VICE-RECTOR JOSE JOAQUIM
GOMES WAS ALSO DISMISSED. MODERATE COIMBRA UNIVERSITY
LAW PROFESSORS HAD EARLIER TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE
RECTOR'S REPLACEMENT WAS ESSENTIAL TO RESTORE
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE AND COUNTER COMMUNIST AND FAR LEFT

INFLUENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY. THE EDUCATION MINISTER FIRED TEIXEIRA WHEN THE RECTOR DECLINED TO FOLLOW THE TRADITIONAL PRACTICE OF OFFERING HIS RESIGNATION TO THE INCOMING GOVERNMENT. FACULTY COUNCILS VOWED TO RESIST THE RECTOR'S REMOVAL. MORE TROUBLE MAY BE EXPECTED WHEN SCHOOL RESUMES NEXT MONTH.

3. FONMIN KNOCKS THE FRENCH: IN EXCERPTS PRINTED HERE FROM "LE MONDE" INTERVIEW, FONMIN MEDEIROS FERREIRA WAS QUOTED AS CRITICIZING THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT FOR ITS RELUCTANCE TO AID PORTUGAL, FOR STALLING EEC ASSISTANCE, AND FOR BEING MORE WILLING TO RECEIVE RIGHT-WING LEADERS GEN KAULZA DE ARRIAGA AND GALVAO DE MELO THAN TO SEE MARIO SOARES. FERREIRA GAVE VOICE TO RESENTMENTS FELT PRIVATELY BY THE PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT, AND PARTICULARLY THE SOCIALISTS. REPORTED ONGOING VISIT OF KAULZA DE ARRIAGA TO PARIS DOES NOT HELP MATTERS.

4. GDUP TO RUN AS MUP: THE FAR-LEFT POPULAR UNITY GROUPS (GDUP) ANNOUNCED SEPT 22 THEIR INTENTION TO COMPETE IN LOCAL ELECTIONS AS THE MOVEMENT OF POPULAR UNITY ("MOVIMENTO DE UNIDADE POPULAR"--MUP). THE GDUP WARNED OF EFFORTS BY OUTSIDE PARTIES (READ PCP) TO INFILTRATE MUP LISTS.

COMMENT: BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PCP APPEAR INTENT UPON AVOIDING VIOLENCE IN THE AGRARIAN SECTOR. IN THE FACE OF GOVERNMENT DETERMINATION, THE PCP MAY HAVE BLINKED.
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